



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

*The Propagation of the Date Palm: Materials for a
Lexicographical Study in Arabic.*—By PAUL POPENOE,
Editor of the Journal of Heredity, Washington, D. C.

Date growing in the southwestern United States has been proved by fifteen years or more of careful experiment to be a profitable industry, and is certain, I believe, to become one of the important commercial cultures in those parts of California and Arizona that are suited to it, within a very few years. Already about 32,000 palm offshoots of the choicest sorts known to the Orient have been imported, representing nearly 400 varieties out of probably 5,000 to be found in different parts of the date-palm region, and more than 150,000 seedling palms, in addition, have been planted out by ranchers and by state and federal experimenters. The culture of the palm, which was brought to approximately its present Oriental state of perfection as early at least as the time of Hammurabi, is being subjected to careful tests by occidental scientists, some of the procedures being retained, and others rejected or improved. But in order that the culture of the palm in the United States shall be as nearly perfect as possible, it is quite necessary that we should have a thorough knowledge of what the Arabs have done. To this end, it is necessary that the scattered but fairly copious Arabic notices of the subject be known, and a necessary preliminary to such a study is an understanding of the vocabulary of the date-palm in the Arabic language. The present paper attempts to present some of the material in one limited branch of the culture, and consists largely of observations which I made during two years in Arabic speaking countries, collecting date palm offshoots for the West India Gardens of Altadena, California.

The date palm offshoot, the sucker by which the palm must be reproduced if it is to come true, is designated by a different name in almost every part of the Arabic-speaking world. In

some parts of Egypt, I am informed, it is known as *faṣīlah* ("weak"), a word also in use among the Berber population of the Wādī Mzāb in Algeria. The word is also used to some extent in Baghdād, and no doubt also in other regions; it is frequently corrupted to *faṣīlah*, a spelling which, however, can be justified orthographically as meaning "ready to be separated from its mother". It is further corrupted to *faṣlah*, a form which in literary Arabic designates an offshoot removed from the mother-palm. *Naqīl* or *nagīl* is another Egyptian name, according to Schweinfurth¹; it appears to be from *naqala*, to transplant, and the alternative spelling نجيل which he gives is doubtless to be set down as a vulgar error.

At al-Baṣrah, the shipping point of the world's greatest date-growing region, the offshoot is commonly called *farkh*, a word which properly designates any young animal or plant, and particularly a young chicken. If the offshoot springs from the trunk some distance above the ground, instead of at the base (the usual position), it is called a *rakbah* ("rider"), a word which is also used at Baghdād by the Badawīn. The general population of Baghdād calls such an offshoot *naghal* (a bastard), while the Christians, who avoid this word from delicacy, use the term *farkh* or else *jummār*, the latter word properly designating the pith or fibrous interior of the palm. *Rukabah* is the form used at Biskra, the chief shipping point for dates in Algeria. Schweinfurth found '*agrab* ("twisted") used in this connection at Assiut in upper Egypt; as offshoots of this kind are frequently distorted, the name seems appropriate. He reports the name at Rosetta to be *masāṣah*, the root of which seems to carry the idea of "to be in contact with", and at el-Qoren he found still another name, '*alūl*, an appellation which carries the idea of defectiveness.

To return to the ordinary type of offshoot, growing from the base of the palm, the customary name at Baghdād is *tālah*, a word of obscure origin. It has been ascribed to the Sanscrit *tal*, a palm; but as I found it in use (though rarely) at Biskra, Algeria, such a derivation seems extremely unlikely. According to Arab lexicographers, it is from a root *tlw*, changed by metathesis to *tlw*; but my friend Father Anastase-Marie of the Carmelite Mission at Baghdād, who has in-

¹ *Arabische Pflanzennamen aus Aegypten, Algerien u. Jemen*, von G. Schweinfurth. Berlin, 1912, Dietrich Reimer.

vestigated the matter with care, thinks the origin is rather to be sought in the Greek *thallos* ("sprig, sprout or sucker"), a conjecture which I willingly adopt.¹

At Biskra the customary word for the offshoot is *jabbār*, the proper signification of which is "stout" or "sturdy". The word is used more correctly in the Wādī Mzāb to designate a palm high enough so that a horse can pass under its leaves; and at Baghdād, and elsewhere among purists, the word is used only to designate a large, strong palm. In Algeria the word *jabbār* is used particularly when an Arab is conversing with foreigners; the Arabs around Biskra, when talking among themselves, habitually refer to the offshoot as *zumrah*, a word which the lexicographers say means "a small company of persons". But as the phrase *nabt zamir* classically means "a plant having few leaves", the word *zumrah* applied to an offshoot probably has been borrowed from this signification, and is not particularly vicious.

In Tunisia, the word regularly used for an offshoot is *ghars*, while in the Fezzān the allied form *maghrūsah* is current. The latter is classical, but also means "a seedling", in which sense I believe it is sometimes used today. The root *gharasa* means simply "to plant a tree".

In the extreme south of Algeria, below Tuggūrt, the offshoot is always called *hashānah*, certainly a corruption of the classical *hishshān*, plural of *hashsh* signifying an uncared-for palm. *Hishsh* (also found with the vowel *a* or *u*) also designates, in dictionary language, a plantation of palms; whence, it is interesting to note, it has taken on the meaning of water-closet.

At al-Madīnah the classical name *ṣinw* ("uterine brother or son") is still in use, while in parts of Najd, Father Anastase-Marie tells me, it is called رَضْعَة (also corrupted to *raṣ'ah*), "the adherent".

In Oman the name *ṣarm* is used, the classical signification of which is "that which is cut off". *Ṣirām* means a crop of dates, but in a *ḥadīth* it is transferred to the palms themselves. As far as I could learn, the Omanis call not only an offshoot, but a seedling palm, *ṣarm*.

¹ I am deeply indebted to Père Anastase-Marie, editor of the monthly journal *Lughat-al-'Arab*, for many other suggestions which have been invaluable to me in the preparation of this paper and in other work.

Finally, in the parts of Algeria bordering on Morocco, the name of an offshoot, I am informed, is *squelem*, a word evidently borrowed from the Berber.

The circle of offshoots around the base of a palm, which imagination might easily liken to a bird's nest, is so designated by the Arabs, *ushsh*. The same word (spelled *'aush* by Schweinfurth) is in use in Egypt, but in the Sudan it may designate a single offshoot, to judge from labels received by the U. S. Department of Agriculture from Dongola. Classically, *'ishshah* describes a palm the leaves of which are few and the base weak. At Baghdād the name for this circle of offshoots is أَشْأَة, plural أَشْأَاء, for which I can suggest no derivation.

It will be observed that the modern Arab has a considerable latitude in choosing a word to signify "a date-palm offshoot". But the literary language contains many other names which are understood, though not colloquially used, by date-growers at the present day. *Sawāh* ("cut off" or "separated"), *ṣaur* ("replica"), *jathīth* ("cut" or "uprooted"), are used in this sense. For the latter, *qathīth* is sometimes written—a dialectal error which can also be justified from the root *qaththa*, to uproot. Richardson's dictionary gives *ḥabalah* or *ḥablah* as a name for the palm offshoot, but I believe the word means only a sprout of the grapevine. *Zarjūn*, which Richardson cites in the same connection, also belongs to the vine rather than the palm; a fact understood from its derivation in the Persian *zargūn*, "color of gold", i. e. wine.

An offshoot high up on the trunk of the palm is called by the classical language *'āqqah* (the root means "to cut"); or *ṣunbūr*, from a root which means "[the palm] was solitary". An offshoot taken from the mother and planted is, in the classics, a *wādī* ("removed"), or هَرَاء (Persian هَرَاء). After being taken from the mother, but not yet planted, the offshoot is called *qa'ah* or *batīlah* or *rakzah*, the root meaning in each case being "cut off" or "detached".

A palm one year old is called a *khar'ab* (with numerous variations in spelling), but this word is not confined to palms, being common to all trees, and transferred to girls of tender years. *Shakīr* designates a palm offshoot, or any other kind of shoot or sucker. *'Aṭīl* is said to have been used in al-Aḥṣā' (the ancient Hajar) to mean an offshoot, but I have found no

authoritative statement to this effect,¹ and if so used, it must have been a dialectal form. Among the classical names occasional found for the offshoot one may add *rīd* and *ja'lah*.

The offshoot is planted (*gharasa* is the customary verb, but in Arabian 'Irāq they now use *shatala*, a word of Aramean origin) in a hole which is classically called *faqīr*, but at present usually *fugrah*. At Baghdād, and also in Egypt, I believe, it is called *hufrah*, both words meaning merely "excavation". At Biskra the regular word is *b'ir*, which properly means a cistern, but is sometimes used in the classical period in this connection. I believe the use of *hufrah* in this sense is not classical.

The palm plantation is called *nakhīl* in the Hījāz, and this appears to me to be the most elegant word. At Baghdād *bustān* is the usual term, although this Persian word properly refers to any kind of a garden. Around the Persian gulf the name *nakhlistān*, (Persian, "palm garden") is often heard. In Algeria they usually say *ghābah* "a forest", but the word *janīnah* (vulgar form of the classical *jannah*, a garden in general) is often used. In southern Tunisia, where the palm plantations are in hollows among the sand dunes, they are called *ghā'it*, or more often by the plural *ghītān*, "hollowed out". In Oman I was told that the plantation was designated as *maqṣūrah*, which means little more than "enclosure". In al-Basrah the Persian *bāghchah*, "little garden", is used for a small plantation.

The literary language is much richer in terms of this sort, many of them figurative. *Hā'it* ("guarded"), *ḥadiqah* ("encircled"), *ḥishsh*, *uqdah*, *ṣawr*, *ḥazīrah* ("an enclosure, a prohibited spot"), *أَيْكَة* ("a thicket"), *ṣarīmah* (regularly "a group of palms"), *manqabah* ("an enclosure"—rare), *jannah* "a garden", *dirham* (a synonym for *ḥadiqah*) are among the terms found. Richardson gives *bāḥah*, but as far as I know this applies only to the courtyard of a house. *Uḥjūm* is classical for "a large plantation of palms". *Jirbah*, meaning a cultivated field, is used by poetic license in some verses of 'Imru-l Qais to designate a palm plantation; the words *maghris* and *mizr'ah*, with similar meaning, are sometimes similarly applied.

¹ The authority cited by the native lexicographers is al-Azhari; see Lane s. v. نَكْلٌ. ED.

As the two sexes are on different trees in the genus *Phoenix*, to which the date-palm belongs, cross-pollination must take place whenever fruit is produced, and the heredity of every date is therefore so mixed that when seeds are planted they rarely reproduce the desired type. Since the dawn of history, therefore, Arabs have propagated the palm ordinarily by offshoots, and rarely planted seeds. Seedling palms are to be found almost everywhere, but they are usually "volunteers", and Arabs in many districts seem scarcely to have a distinct name for them. Classically the word *daqḥah* occupied this place, but nowadays it has been attached to so many good varieties, at present reproduced only through offshoots, that in nearly every district it has lost most of its original meaning. In Algeria *daqḥat* [al-] *nūr*, ("the translucent seedling") is the finest date grown, and no one nowadays would think of propagating it from seed. The Algerians do not have any well-defined word for seedling, but in southern Tunisia the word *ḥishshān* (used in the Algerian Sahara for "offshoot") has that signification. In Arabian 'Irāq the word *daqal* is still used, but it carries two ideas, as it does also classically: (1) a palm produced from seed; (2) a palm of unknown variety. The Baghdādī usually designates a seedling explicitly as *tālah* *daqḥah*. The unequivocal classical word is *jam'*, from the root "to gather together"; *sharbah* is a synonym; while *jathīth*, sometimes designating an offshoot, may also designate a seedling. *Khud'ah* is another synonym, because the origin of a seedling is *humble*. The word *'ajamah* or *'ajmah*, from the root "to chew", apparently gets its application because the seed is the part of the fruit which one bites upon. In Egypt Schweinfurth found نقيلة الاويلة in use at el-Qoren to designate a seedling, while the natives of Assiut, Luxor and Qené said "*scheṭl'*". The poverty of this vocabulary strikingly reflects the state of mind of the oasis dweller, who hardly considers a seedling palm to be entitled to the name of date-palm.